

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 /079 W
-----015290 040617Z /21/65

R 032247Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1015
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT CORRECTED PARA1.)

USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, FR
SUBJECT: CFDT POLICY SHIFT RATIFIED

REF: PARIS 11705 AND 10342

1. SUMMARY: THE CFDT'S NATIONAL COUNCIL HAS RATIFIED,
WITHOUT SERIOUS OPPOSITION, THE CHANGE IN THAT CON-
FEDERATION'S POLICY ANNOUNCED EARLIER BY GENERAL
SECRATARY MAIRE. THE CFDT IS NOW STRESSING ITS TRADE
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UNION, AS OPPOSED TO ITS POLITICAL, ROLE; AND ALTHOUGH
LOOSENING ITS ALLIANCE WITH THE CGT, STILL REMAINS
COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH IT AND OTHER INTERESTED
UNIONS. THAT DECISION, AND MUTUAL GRASS ROOTS AN-
TAGONISM, RULES OUT ANY RAPPROCHEMENT WITH FO.
END SUMMARY.

2. ON MAY 2, THE CFDT NATIONAL EXECUTIVE HELD A MAJOR PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE THE RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING CALLED TO RATIFY THE CONFEDERATION'S RECENT ANNOUNCED SHIFT IN POLICY (SEE REFTELS). SPEAKING TO A FULL HOUSE, GENERAL SECRETARY MAIRE STATED THAT THE COUNCIL HAD CONFIRMED THE NEW LINE WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION; A RETURN FROM POLITICS TO TRADE UNIONISM.

A. IN PRESENTING THESE DEVELOPMENTS, MAIRE STRESSED THAT THE COUNCIL'S DEBATE HAD FOCUSED ON TWO ISSUES: NEGOTIATIONS, AND THE CFDT'S IMAGE IN THE MEDIA. WITH RESPECT TO THE NEGOTIATIONS, MAIRE SAID THAT IT WAS THE SENSE OF THE COUNCIL THAT NEGOTIATING BE DIRECTED PRIMARILY AT RAISING THE LOWER WAGE LEVELS, AND IN PARTICULAR, THE MINIMUM WAGE; IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS; AND EXTENDING TRADE UNION LEGAL RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE, AND IN PARTICULAR IN THE COMITES D'ENTREPRISE. AS FAR AS THE MANNER IN WHICH THE NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED, MAIRE SAID THAT CFDT WANTED TO SEE THEM AS DECENTRALIZED AS POSSIBLE, BY BRANCH OF INDUSTRY AND, IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS PLACED ON BARGAINING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

B. AS FAR AS THE CFDT'S PUBLIC IMAGE IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONCERNED, MAIRE SAID THAT THE COUNCIL FELT THAT THE MEDIA HAS BEEN OVEREMPHASIZING THE CFDT'S ANTI-CAPITALISM IMAGE, ITS COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING AUTOGESTION, AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS TRADE UNION ROLE, AND THAT THIS HAS TO BE CORRECTED.

3. WITH RESPECT TO UNITY OF ACTION, MAIRE SAID THAT THE CFDT BELIEVES THAT A UNITY OF POPULAR FORCES, INCLUDING ITS ALLIANCE WITH THE CGT, IS STILL NECESSARY, BUT THAT THE ELECTION HAD PROVIDED SEVERAL IMPORTANT LESSONS: REPEATING EARLIER CRITICISMS THAT THE SOCIALISTS WERE TOO ELECTION-ORIENTED AND THE COMMUNISTS INTERESTED ONLY IN OBTAINING HEGEMONY OVER THE LEFT, MAIRE STRESSED THAT THE CGT'S LACK OF ANY REAL INDEPENDENCE FROM THE PCF LIMITS THE POSSIBILITY OF UNITY OF ACTION WITH THAT CONFEDERATION TO SPECIFIC ISSUES, BUT THAT THESE SHOULD BE DEVELOPED TO INCLUDE AS MANY AS POSSIBLE. THAT, IN TURN, RULED OUT COOPERATION WITH FO BECAUSE THAT UNION STILL REFUSES JOINT ACTION WITH THE CGT. (MAIRE ALSO NOTED SOME OBJECTIONS BY THE RANK AND FILE TO ANY COOPERATION WITH FO.)

4. IN A SUBSEQUENT QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH THE JOURNALISTS, MAIRE SAID THAT THE CFDT'S REFERENCE TO THE STRATEGY OF A UNION OF POPULAR FORCES WAS NOT

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INTENDED TO SERVE AS A SUBSTITUTE OR REPLACEMENT FOR THE UNION OF THE LEFT AS IT WAS UP TO THE POLITICAL PARTIES TO WORK OUT THEIR OWN SETTLEMENTS. AS FOR UNITY OF ACTION WITH THE CGT, MAIRE SAID THAT IT WAS, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, STILL WORTHWHILE, BECAUSE THAT UNION IS CHANGING, ADMITTEDLY VERY SLOWLY AND IN A LIMITED WAY, BUT CHANGING NONETHELESS.

5. COMMENT: LOOKING BEHIND THE SCENES, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT ONE REASON THE NATIONAL COUNCIL WAS SO UNANIMOUS IN ITS SUPPORT OF MAIRE'S SHIFT IN POLICY WAS A CLEAR SIGNAL, DELIVERED ON THE EVE OF THEIR
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GATHERING, BY THE IMPORTANT METALWORKERS FEDERATION: WHATEVER THE COUNCIL MIGHT DECIDE, THE METALWORKERS WERE GOING FOR NEGOTIATIONS, ON REAL BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES. THIS APPEARED TO HELP CLARIFY THE THINKING OF THE MORE REMANTIC MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

6. IN ANY EVENT, THIS SHIFT IN POLICY OPENS UP A SIGNIFICANT POSSIBILITY FOR MAKING REAL PROGRESS IN THE SOCIAL SCENE, AND RESTORING REAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. BUT, THERE ARE STILL A LOT OF PROBLEMS TO BE RESOLVED IN THAT AREA AND THIS WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE MESSAGE. AT THIS POINT, WE ONLY NOTE THAT MAIRE'S CHIDING THE PRESS FOR OVERPLAYING THE CFDT'S POLITICAL AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS TRADE UNION NATURE RAISED NOT A FEW EYEBROWS. AFTER ALL, THE FRENCH WORKING PRESS IS HEAVILY BIASED IN FAVOR OF THE CFDT, AND IF THEY HAVE CONTINUALLY STRESSED THE CONFEDERATION'S POLITICAL POSITIONS, IT IS BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN FAITHFULLY REPORTING AND SUPPORTING THE LINE AND TONE SET BY MAIRE HIMSELF.
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